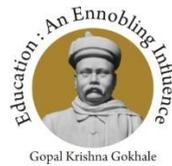
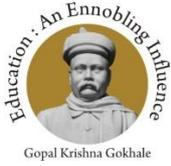


**HOW MODEL IS THE MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT?  
A PRE-POLL VOTER SURVEY IN MUNICIPAL COUNCILS  
IN MAHARASHTRA**

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## FOREWORD

1. Maharashtra is one of the most urbanized States in the Country with nearly 44% of its population living in 358 Municipal Councils / Nagar Panchayats and 27 Municipal Corporations areas. State Election Commission, which was established in 1994 following the 73<sup>rd</sup> & 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments to the Indian Constitution, conducts elections for nearly 10,130 seats in these urban bodies every 5 years.
2. State Election Commission, which has been entrusted with the responsibility of conducting free, fair and transparent elections, has to ensure level playing field to all the political parties and candidates. Nobody, especially the party in power, should get any preferential treatment. Similarly, the political parties and the candidates have the responsibility to conduct themselves in a proper manner during the period of election.
3. In order to achieve the above objective, political parties themselves decided as early as in 1960 upon a set of guidelines for their conduct and behaviour during the period of elections. These guidelines known as Model Code of Conduct (MCC) broadly regulate the following:-
  - i) **Peace and Order** - Peaceful and orderly conduct of every meeting, processions etc.
  - ii) **Equal opportunity** to use various public places like public grounds, landing sites, government guest-houses etc.
  - iii) **Right of citizens to peace** – Prohibition on defacing walls with graffiti, posters, etc. without prior permission of the owner or occupier of the property.
  - iv) **Decorum in a campaign**— Prohibition on personal attacks, criticism of the private lives of individuals, and allegations based on unverified facts etc.
  - v) **Preventing corrupt practices and electoral offences**—Prohibition on the use of religion or religious sentiments, activities which may create mutual hatred between different castes and/or communities, and on bribing voters etc.
  - vi) **Preventing misuse of government machinery and position of power**—Prohibition on the use of official vehicles or combining official

visits with election work, launching of new schemes or programs just prior to the elections with a view to entice the voter, etc.

- vii) **Restrictions on Government** -Ministers shall not
- a) Use official machinery or personnel during electioneering work,
  - b) Sanction grants/payments out of discretionary funds,
  - c) Announce or promise financial grants in any form
  - d) Lay foundation stones for projects of any kind
  - e) Make promise of projects like roads, water facilities, etc. or
  - f) Make any ad hoc appointments in government /public sector undertakings.
4. Though the Election Commission tries to enforce the MCC with the help of various political parties, many a times, cases of its violation are reported during the period of elections.
5. In view of above, State Election Commission, Maharashtra decided in October,2016 to conduct a Voters Perception survey about violation of the MCC in the Municipal Council elections scheduled during November,2016.
6. I am glad that Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune has conducted Voter Perception Study in 20 Municipal Councils by contacting more than 6000 voter-respondents between 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2016 to 5<sup>th</sup> November 2016, with the help of 80 enumerators. The study has come out with some very interesting results, some of which are as follows :-
- (i) Nearly 50 per cent voters feel that MCC guidelines are fairly important for the conduct of free and fair elections
  - (ii) Nearly 60 per cent voters reportedly witnessed some form of violation
  - (iii) Most commonly observed violation was distribution of cash/ liquor, freebies etc. as well as use of caste and religion in campaigning.

7. I take this opportunity to congratulate Smt. Manasi Phadke, Dr. Rajas Parchure and the entire team of Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics for making this analytical study possible.
8. I am further pleased to learn that Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics is publishing the survey findings in a book form, elucidating their methodology and analysis. I am sure this will help in improving the quality of the candidates in future and result in more free, fair and transparent elections.

**Shri. J. Saharia**  
State Election Commission  
Maharashtra

Date: .....

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I am very pleased to present this report titled “How Model is the Model Code of Conduct: A Pre-poll Voter Perception Survey in Municipal Councils in Maharashtra” to the readers and scholars of decentralization. As the discerning reader must be aware, the State Election Commission of Maharashtra has been conducting local body elections in Maharashtra from 1994. It has been working tirelessly to increase the voter turnout and conduct elections in a free, fair and transparent manner.

Despite continuous efforts by the SEC, reports of violation of MCC run rife in the media in the run-up to the elections. The immediate, and mostly mute, spectator to these violations is the voter. This voter attends meetings in which there might be personal attacks on opponents, is visited by party workers who might invoke religion or caste to influence the voter, experiences traffic jams in the locality before meetings, realizes that new roads are being laid just before the elections, and sometimes even experiences first-hand an attempt by the candidates to bribe him/ her to garner votes.

Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics was given the task of analysing voter perceptions regarding MCC violations. We created a questionnaire and a sampling plan encompassing 20 Municipal Councils in Maharashtra that would help us to look scientifically into voter perceptions regarding MCC. The results are very interesting indeed and have been presented in great detail in the report.

Let me express my gratitude to Shri Jageshwar Saharia, State Election Commissioner, Maharashtra, for granting this interesting study project to Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics. Shri Shekhar Chenne, Secretary, State Election Commission, Maharashtra, was a mentor for our team and guided and supported us at every stage of the project.

Mrs. Manasi Phadke has been the chief co-ordinator of this project and has been driving the processes right from data management to writing the report meticulously. I congratulate her for coming out with a timely and interesting publication. Mr. Pramod Sadolikar, our survey co-ordinator for the project, helped to put together the survey teams to drive the project in record time. I am grateful to Mr. Anand Karandikar, who gave us excellent inputs on the design of the

questionnaire. Mrs. Anjali Shitole was instrumental in helping us with the statistical part of the analysis. Ms. Manisha Shinde was in charge of the Quality Check of the data, which she handled very efficiently. Mr. Rajesh Bhatikar meticulously edited the document. Mr. Vilas Mankar gave us all the technical assistance needed for this project.

This project helped us to gain deep insights into the dynamics of local body elections from a voter perspective. I am sure that the report will serve as a useful addition to the existing literature on the subject.

**Prof. Rajas Parchure**  
Offg. Director  
Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics  
Pune

Date: .....

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Elections are political events with high stakes. The prime objective of any political party is essentially to come to power, be it in a municipal council or corporation, state assembly or the parliament. When coming to power is the stated objective, the temptation to deploy unethical means and practices to win votes is very high. Through a vigorous campaigning process, all political parties tend to make every attempt to woo the voters through various means, canvassing their strengths and making developmental promises that they promise to fulfil if voted to power. How can this temptation to deploy unethical practices in an election be prevented?

World over, there has been a debate on whether ethical conduct of political parties or candidates can be ensured through law. In many countries, some kind of a code of conduct has evolved through a consensus mechanism between political parties over a period of time.

Academic literature on political science in general and election campaigns in particular points to the many advantages and disadvantages that a code of conduct is associated with. On the positive side, a code of conduct takes on the characteristics of a “soft law”, which has been seen to be highly effective in terms of shaping attitudes and cultures of organizations in various social spheres<sup>1</sup>. A code is also desirable in that its violation creates a reputational cost for political parties, which is seen to be one of the most damaging costs in public life, perhaps, almost as damaging as a legal suit would be. On the negative side, however, the most severe issue with having a separate code of conduct perhaps is that the presence of a code by itself is recognition of the fact that ethical culture is different from public life and hence has to be enforced through a documentation of what is ethical<sup>2</sup>.

The history pertaining to the creation of a code of conduct in India is interesting. It is believed that the first time political parties adhered to any such code was in the Kerala State Assembly elections in 1960. In the 1962 Lok Sabha elections the State Governments were asked to obtain feedback from recognised political parties about acceptance and applicability of the Code. The Model Code of Conduct or MCC was thus used extensively for the first time in the 1962 Lok Sabha elections and has continued since then<sup>3</sup>.

In India, the “Model Code of Conduct” or the MCC is not legally binding, though certain provisions of the same may be legally enforced through similar provisions which exist under other laws such as the Representation of the People Act 1951, Indian Penal Code 1860<sup>4</sup> etc. The Election Commission of India has taken a stance that since the applicability of the MCC is for a period of about 45 days, whereas typically legal proceedings take longer than that, it may not be practical to make the MCC legally enforceable in India<sup>5</sup>.

A summary of what the major provisions of the MCC are can be found on PRS blog<sup>6</sup>.

“The MCC contains eight provisions dealing with general conduct, meetings, processions, polling day, polling booths, observers, party in power, and election manifestos. In General Conduct

- *General Conduct*: Criticism of political parties must be limited to their policies and programmes, past record and work. Activities such as: (a) using caste and communal feelings to secure votes, (b) criticising candidates on the basis of unverified reports, (c) bribing or intimidation of voters, and (d) organising demonstrations or picketing outside houses of persons to protest against their opinions, are prohibited.
- *Meetings*: Parties must inform the local police authorities of the venue and time of any meeting in time to enable the police to make adequate security arrangements.
- *Processions*: If two or more candidates plan processions along the same route, organisers must establish contact in advance to ensure that the processions do not clash. Carrying and burning effigies representing members of other political parties is not allowed.
- *Polling day*: All authorised party workers at polling booths should be given identity badges. These should not contain the party name, symbol or name of the candidate.
- *Polling booths*: Only voters, and those with a valid pass from the Election Commission, will be allowed to enter polling booths.
- *Observers*: The Election Commission will appoint observers to whom any candidates may report problems regarding the conduct of the election.
- *Party in power*: The MCC incorporated certain restrictions in 1979, regulating the conduct of the party in power. Ministers must not combine official visits with election work or use official machinery for the same. The party must avoid advertising at the cost of the public exchequer or using official mass media for publicity on achievements to improve chances of victory in the elections. Ministers and other authorities must not announce any financial grants, or promise any construction of roads, provision of drinking water, etc. Other parties must be allowed to use public spaces and rest houses and these must not be monopolised by the party in power.
- *Election manifestos*: Added in 2013, these guidelines prohibit parties from making promises that exert an undue influence on voters, and suggest that manifestos also indicate the means to achieve promises”

### **Municipal Councils Elections, 2016 and the MCC in Maharashtra**

164 Municipal Councils in Maharashtra went into election mode in 2016, beginning 27<sup>th</sup> November 2016. The Model Code of Conduct was declared applicable for all the Councils on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2016, when the elections were announced by the State Election Commission of Maharashtra (SECM). The SECM further announced that if more than 4 Municipal Councils in a district headed to polls simultaneously, the MCC guidelines would be applicable to the entire district as a unit from 15<sup>th</sup> October 2016.

## OBJECTIVE OF THE SURVEY

Even though the guidelines for conduct spell out the do's and don'ts very clearly, violation of the same is a known and observed phenomenon throughout Maharashtra. The temptation to flout the guidelines for personal advantage gets stronger as the election date approaches. Bribing the voters through distribution of money, freebies and liquor, at times intimidating the voter, giving hate speeches, disrupting meetings and processions of opponents, etc. are known violations of the MCC. These violations are observed by the common man, the voter, but are not necessarily recorded formally.

The survey is an attempt to understand from the common voter what her perceptions are about the MCC. Have MCC violations taken place? If so, which violations are readily observed by the voters? In which divisions of Maharashtra are violations of the MCC most readily observed? It is in these divisions that the SEC will have to deploy more machinery in order to conduct elections in a free, fair and transparent manner. Further, violation of MCC implies a failure of the implementation machinery. Why, according to the voters, has the implementation machinery failed? Is it because the observers are inefficient, or is it because the machinery itself succumbs to corruption?

These and other issues might have been addressed in some occasional articles in the local media, but a systematic attempt to document and analyze voter impressions regarding MCC violations does not exist in India. This study is hence the first-of-its-kind attempt at formalizing voter perceptions regarding the Model Code of Conduct and its implementation in local body elections in Maharashtra.

## CHAPTER 2

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main objective of the study is to formally document and analyze voter perceptions regarding the Model Code of Conduct and issues regarding its implementation. It aims to understand the nature of MCC violations experienced by the voters, the extent of such violations, and why, according to voters, the existing implementation machinery has failed to prevent blatant violation of the MCC.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main research questions incorporated in the survey design were the following:

#### **I. Voter perception regarding usefulness of the MCC**

- a. How aware are voters regarding MCC guidelines?
- b. How important, according to voters, are MCC guidelines for smooth conduct of elections?

#### **II. Voter perceptions regarding violations of the MCC**

- a. Do voters observe blatant violation of the Model Code of Conduct?
- b. Which of the codes of conduct are flouted most blatantly and most frequently?
- c. How many voters agree to having witnessed instances of bribery or distribution of cash and freebies for influencing votes?
- d. Importantly, do voters feel that bribery affects electoral outcomes?
- e. Do male and female voters perceive and experience MCC violations differently?
- f. Do the richer and poorer classes of voters perceive MCC violations differently?
- g. Do younger and older voters perceive MCC violations differently?
- h. Is the violation of MCC as observed by the voters different across different geographical zones?
- i. Does a higher level of MCC violation get reported by voters in Municipal Councils which have an element of “swing” i.e. is the MCC violation as perceived by voters high in constituencies with neck-to-neck competition between the political parties?
- j. Political parties are normally seen to be in fierce contest in areas with higher voter turnout. Is MCC violation as perceived by voters higher in Councils with high voter turnout?

#### **III. Voter Perceptions regarding the existing MCC implementation machinery**

- a. How do voters rank the current MCC implementation machinery?
- b. If this ranking is poor, what, according to them, are the reasons for poor implementation?

- c. Is poor implementation linked to low efficiency of the machinery, or is it the case that the machinery is itself corrupt?
- d. Does the machinery work under pressure? Is more manpower required on field?

Identifying the research questions exactly is an integral part of any survey. Once the research questions are designed, the next step is to construct a tool or a questionnaire in order to get proper answers to the questions. The questionnaire prepared for this survey is given in Appendix A of the report.

## CHAPTER 3

### DESIGN OF SURVEY AND SAMPLING CONSIDERATIONS

Sampling is a crucial part of survey design. The sample has to be sufficiently representative of the population so that the results obtained on the basis of the sample can be generalized to the population. A voter perception survey in different Municipal Councils in Maharashtra required a process of selection of the Councils in a statistically scientific manner. It also required deliberation on how to identify the voter respondents within every Council. This chapter outlines the various sampling aspects of the research proposal.

#### SAMPLING PLAN:

The 164 Municipal Councils wherein elections were held in November were spread across Maharashtra. It was decided to choose 10-15 per cent of the Councils, i.e. about 20 Municipal Councils, based on cost and time considerations. This also appeared reasonable since it covered 16-18 districts across the geographical spread of Maharashtra.

Cluster sampling was used in a 2-stage procedure to identify the Municipal Councils in which the study would be undertaken. The following section gives a detailed explanation of the sampling design.

#### TWO-STAGE SAMPLING PROCESS

Following steps were used in identifying the 20 Councils for the purpose of the survey.

##### Step I: Cluster Sampling Design for Identifying 20 Councils

An earlier study<sup>7</sup> of election data by Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics suggests that Municipal Councils can be classified into “clusters” by the patterns in the following 4 variables:

1. Level of competition between political parties or “swing” (High, Medium, Low)<sup>8</sup>
2. Voter turnout (High, Medium, Low)
3. Proportion of reserved seats in the Council (High, Medium, Low)
4. Political alignment of the local party in power with the party in power at State Government level (High, Medium, Low)<sup>3</sup>

This classification or cluster analysis is relevant for the sampling design at hand because Councils with high level of competition amongst political parties are likely to witness a much higher play of money and muscle power (and, therefore, higher incidences of violation of MCC) as compared to Councils dominated by a single party.

Similarly, Councils with higher voter turnout tend to experience higher presence of political parties. Hence, one would be more likely to see a higher movement of money in these Councils as compared to those with low voter turnout.

Where the proportion of reserved seats is high, caste could play a big role in attracting the voters. Election dynamics, electoral tactics and money power issues would accordingly be different in those Councils with high proportion of reserved seats and those with a lower proportion of reserved seats. There is another inherent advantage in using this variable for classifying the Councils. Councils with higher proportion of reserved seats are generally observed to have a lower development quotient. Hence, classification by this variable also gives us a classification by level of development.

If the local party in power is politically aligned with the State incumbent (i.e., party in power at the state government level), there could be inherent advantages to the local incumbent, leading to an impact on usage of funds required for election purposes. Thus, classification of Councils as per above mentioned variables would be useful and relevant to create a sampling design for the survey.

Step I was then to classify the Councils using each of the variables mentioned above, in the following manner.

1. Classify Councils as high, medium and low swing areas. Sample 2 Councils from high swing areas, 2 from low swing areas and 2 from medium swing areas. Thus, 6 Councils were identified using the swing quotient.
2. Classify Councils as high, medium and low voter turnout areas. Sample 2 Councils from high voter turnout areas, 2 from low voter turnout areas and 2 from medium voter turnout areas. Thus, 6 Councils were identified based on voter turnout.
3. Classify Councils as high, medium and low reservation proportion areas. Sample 2 Councils from high reservation proportion areas, 2 from low reservation proportion areas and 2 from medium reservation proportion areas. Thus, 6 Councils were identified based on their reservation proportion.
4. Classify Councils as those with political alignment and those without political alignment during the last round of elections (2009-13). Sample 2 Councils from those which are aligned with the State incumbent and 2 from those which are not aligned with the State incumbent. Thus, 4 Councils were identified based on their political alignment quotient.
5. This gives a total of 22 Councils.
6. There is a fifth variable using which the referred study classifies Councils. Councils can also be classified using the proportion of independents winning seats in the elections. Maindargi in Solapur district is a unique Council in that 100% of the seats in the Council have been won by Independents in last 3 rounds of elections.

7. The Maindargi Council could have very different electoral dynamics due to this unique feature and hence, the 23<sup>rd</sup> Council was chosen purposively.
8. The Chopda Municipal Council has a medium voter turnout and a high swing quotient. It was selected under both the criteria. Thus, the total number of Councils chosen was 22.

### **Step II: Ensuring a Geographical Spread**

Of the 164 Councils moving into election mode in November and December, there is a larger concentration in Aurangabad division (39 Councils) followed by Pune (33 Councils) and Amravati (33 Councils). The sample drawn had to reflect this geographical concentration too. The proportion of 164 Councils in each division was used to choose the relevant number of Councils in the sample in that division. The following table shows the sampling pattern in detail.

Table 3.1: Selection of Municipal Councils in the Sample

Geographical Spread of the Councils and the Sample				Voter Turnout			Proportion of reserved seats in the Councils			Swing			Political Alignment with State Incumbent (2009-13)		100% Seats won by Independent Candidates (Purposive, atypical selection)
Sr. No.	Divisions	No. of Councils with elections in 2016	Proportional number of sample Councils	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	Yes	No	
1	Amravati	33	4	Buldhana						Murtizapur, JalgaonJamod		Digras			
2	Aurangabad	39	5	Beed		PethUmri		Tuljapur	Dharambad		Hingoli				
3	Konkan	17	2				Vengurla, Roha*								
4	Nagpur	13	2						Pulgaon					Pauni	
5	Nashik	29	4		Chopda	Shirdi N.P						Chopda	Faizpur		
6	Pune	34	5		Jaysingpur			Kagal			Kurduwadi		Murgud	Talegaon-Dabhade	Maindargi
	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>22</b>												

\*In the above sampling plan, Vengurle and Malwan Councils had been selected in the Konkan division. Both Councils have a low proportion of reserved seats and belong to the Sindhudurg district. It is likely that electoral issues in both the Councils could be similar and hence, Malwan was dropped from the sample and in its place Roha Council from Raigad district in Konkan division, which is also a Council with a low reservation proportion, was chosen randomly.

Further, Buldhana and JalgaonJamod are both in the Buldhana district; but no substitutions were made because the underlying criteria by which these Councils were chosen were different.

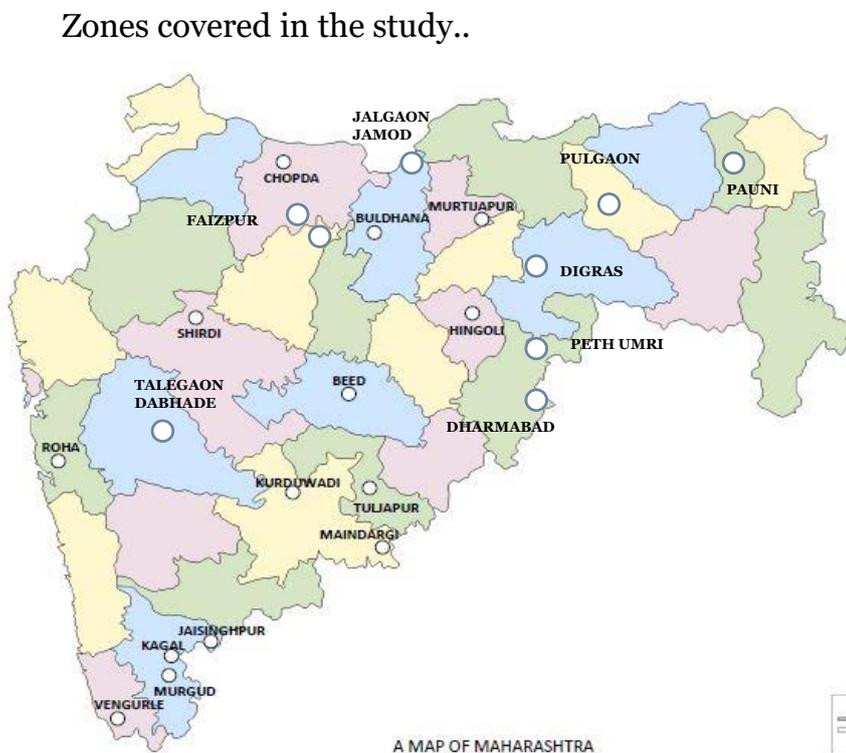
Another case is Chopda and Faizpur. Both the Councils are in Jalgaon district in Nashik division, but again the underlying criteria through which these were selected are different and hence, no substitutions have been carried out there.

Jaysingpur and Kagal are geographically very close to each other. Kagal was selected because it belongs to the medium cluster in terms of reservations. Jaysingpur shows the same cluster membership and hence Kagal was dropped from the sample.

Same is the case with Kurduwadi, which is geographically very close to Maindargi in Solapur district and hence, it too was dropped from the sample.

Thus, a sample of 20 Municipal Councils covering 16 districts of Maharashtra was drawn for the purpose of the study. The following map shows the geographical coverage of the study.

**Map 3.1: Geographical Spread of Municipal Councils chosen for Analysis of Voter Perception about MCC (Phase II and Phase III)**



### Phase II and Phase III of elections in Municipal Councils:

Elections to the Municipal Councils were conducted in three phases. Of the above 20 Councils, 16 Councils went to polls on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2016, whereas 4 Councils went to polls on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2016. These are referred to as Phase II and Phase III of Council elections. The voter perceptions in the run-up to elections in both Phase II as well as Phase III have been covered in this report.

**Table 3.2: Municipal Councils, Districts and Divisions in the sample**

Name of Municipal Council	District	Division
Beed	Beed	Aurangabad
Dharmabad	Nanded	Aurangabad
Hingoli	Hingoli	Aurangabad
PethUmri	Nanded	Aurangabad
Tuljapur	Osmanabad	Aurangabad
Talegaon-Dabhade	Pune	Pune
Murgud	Kolhapur	Pune
Jaisingpur	Kolhapur	Pune
Maindargi	Solapur	Pune
Shirdi	Ahmednagar	Nashik
Chopda	Jalgaon	Nashik
Faizpur	Jalgaon	Nashik
Buldhana	Buldhana	Amravati
Murtijapur	Akola	Amravati
Roha	Raigad	Konkan
Vengurle	Sindhudurg	Konkan
Pauni	Bhandara	Nagpur
Pulgaon	Wardha	Nagpur

### Step III: Sampling the Respondents

Municipal Councils govern areas with population ranging from 25000 to about 1000000. The number of voters is normally about 60-70 per cent of the total population, implying that the voter population in each Council ranges from 15000 to 600000. On the basis of the estimated voter population per Council, the number of respondents per Council was to be determined.

At 95% Confidence Interval and 5% Margin of Error, the sample size was worked out to be about 360. Thus, in every Council, a sample size of 360 voters was to be chosen.

Any sample plan has to create steps to move from the most aggregated survey level, in this case the voting population of the Municipal Councils, to the most disaggregated level, in this case the voter-respondent. The next step was to create a sampling plan so as to reach the voter-respondent for the purpose of the survey.

A systematic sampling plan was chosen to reach the respondents. Using voter lists of the Municipal Councils shared by the SECM, this entailed choosing voters in such a fashion that each voter (within a class interval) had an equal probability of being chosen.

For this, the voting population shown in the voter list was divided by 360 to get same-sized intervals. In every interval, names and addresses of voters were given; every voter had a serial number. In the first interval, a serial number was chosen randomly and then, addition of 360 to the random number used to identify the voters in the next intervals.

In this manner, 360 voters per Council were chosen to respond to a specially designed questionnaire, which is given in Appendix A. Enumerators were trained to understand the sampling procedure; they were asked to approach the next serial number (of same gender and belonging to the same age-group such as 20-30, 30-40, 40-50, 50-60 and 60 above) in the class interval, if the voter as identified by the systematic sampling plan was not present in the city for some reason. However, if the voter as identified by the sampling plan was present in the city, but had gone for his job during the day, the enumerator was to schedule an appointment with her for the evening and conduct the interview with the same person in the evening.

### **TIME PERIOD OF THE SURVEY**

The survey was to be conducted once the Model Code of Conduct was declared to be applicable in the Councils. However, since violations of the MCC tend to become more blatant and obvious as the election draws closer, it was decided to conduct the survey one week prior to the elections. Thus, the survey was conducted from 21<sup>st</sup> November to 27<sup>th</sup> November (day of elections), 2016 in the chosen 20 Municipal Councils in Maharashtra.

### **SAMPLING ISSUES AND FIELD PROBLEMS**

There were two major problems that we faced in terms of completing the required sample size. The first one had to do with the accuracy of the voters' list. The systematic sampling entailed selecting voters as per the voters' list and then approaching them at the address given in the list. However, many a times, the voter had either moved to another city, or was in the same city, but at another address. Names of some deceased voters have not been removed from the voters' list, causing issues on field. In some cases the addresses recorded in the voters' list were incomplete or inadequate for the enumerator to reach the correct house; in some cases the addresses were completely wrong. The enumerator would reach the address, only to find that no person as identified in the voter list had ever stayed there.

The second issue that we faced was the time period in which the survey was being conducted. The week prior to the election is extremely tricky for conducting any survey, especially surveys that sought voter insight in violation of code of conduct. In some Councils the enumerators were met with suspicion. At times, they were questioned by police authorities, at times by the party workers belonging to different political parties and at times, by the voters themselves, about the issues they were studying. Some enumerators were forced to stop the survey halfway. Many a voter would initially agree to being interviewed, but would stop halfway through the survey, not willing to share too many details about his/ her perception. This caused multiple issues in terms of managing the field. The matter was further complicated by the fact that the survey had to be conducted only for a week.

This caused some deviations between the final sample size that was fixed before the survey and the actual sample that was collected by enumerators. In Maindargi, Talegaon-Dabhade, Peth Umri, Digras and Murtizapur, the actual sample size was slightly lower than the desired sample size. Following table shows the sample size collected in the different Municipal Councils within the sample.

**Table 3.3: Actual Sample Size collected in the Municipal Councils**

<b>Municipal Council</b>	<b>Number of voter-respondents</b>	<b>Percent of total voters</b>
<b>Maindargi</b>	348	4.8
<b>Jaysingpur</b>	414	5.7
<b>Murgud</b>	386	5.3
<b>Talegaon Dabhade</b>	221	3.0
<b>Shirdi</b>	392	5.4
<b>Chopada</b>	421	5.7
<b>Faizpur</b>	437	6.0
<b>Beed</b>	423	5.8
<b>Umri</b>	338	4.6
<b>Tuljapur</b>	401	5.5
<b>Dharmabad</b>	391	5.3
<b>Hingoli</b>	426	5.8
<b>Vengurle</b>	400	5.5
<b>Roha</b>	362	4.9
<b>Buldhana</b>	365	5.0
<b>Jalgaon Jamod</b>	373	5.1
<b>Digras</b>	311	4.2
<b>Murtizapur</b>	142	1.9
<b>Pavani</b>	372	5.1
<b>Pulgaon</b>	401	5.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>7324</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The next chapter gives details regarding the demographic characteristics of the sample.

## CHAPTER 4

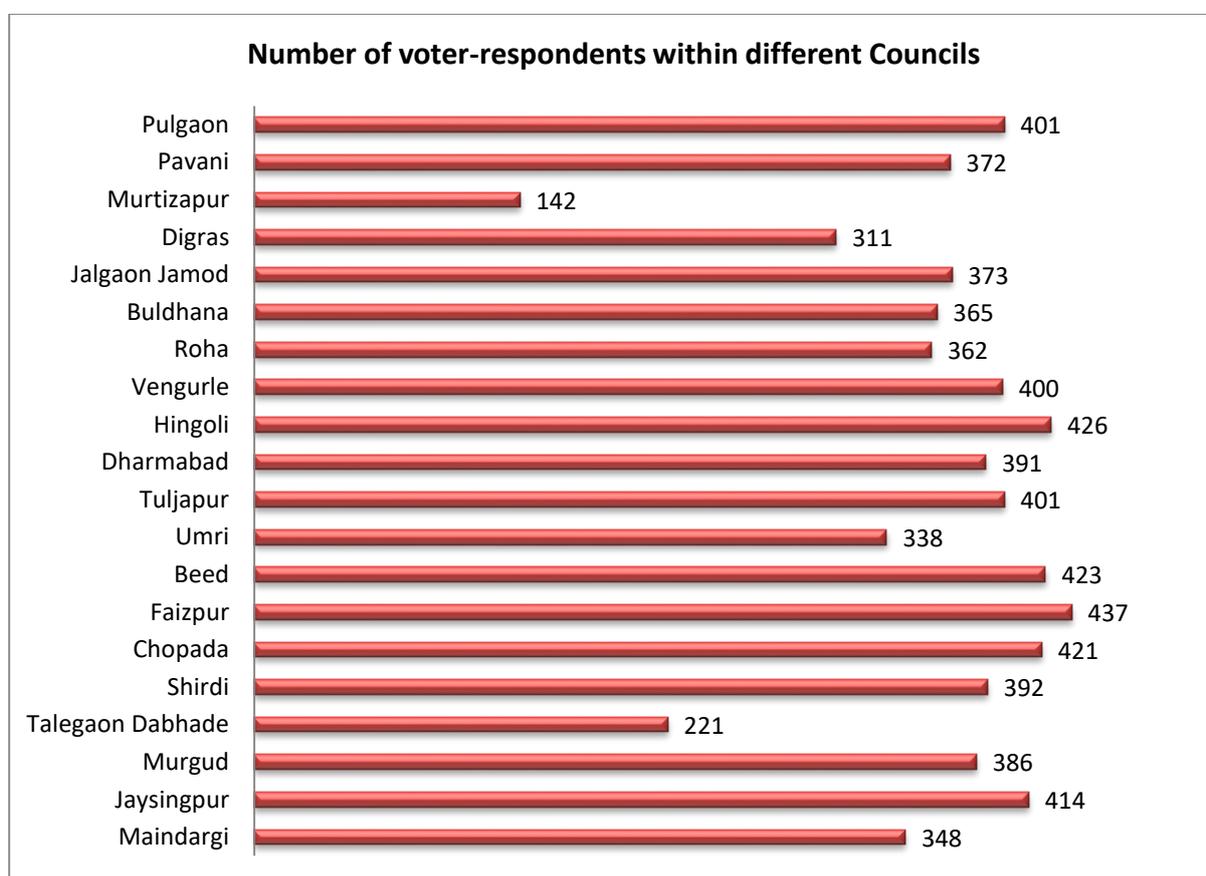
### SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

This chapter outlines the major characteristics of the sample. As mentioned earlier, enumerators were trained to undertake the survey as per the pre-determined, systematic sampling plan. The main advantage of using systematic sampling is that it aids in getting a fairly representative sample to study the population. An examination of sample characteristics helps us to understand the coverage of male and female voters of different ages and from different socio-economic classifications.

#### 4.1 Sample size in different Municipal Councils

The sample voters in the different Municipal Councils are given in the following figure.

**Graph 4.1: Sample Size in Different Municipal Councils**



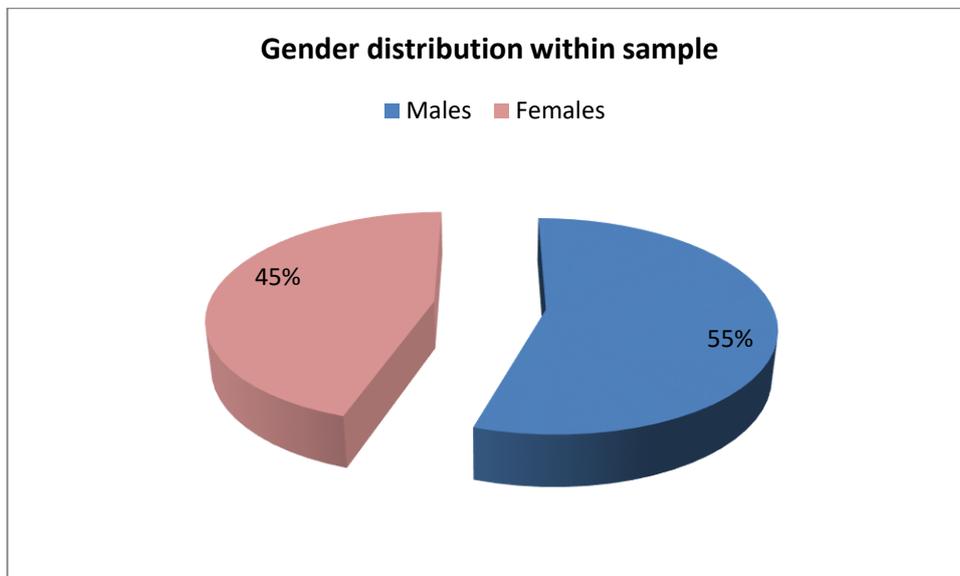
## 4.2 Sample Distribution by Gender

55 per cent of the sample respondents are male voters and about 45 per cent of the sample respondents are female voters; there is thus, no major gender bias in the sample.

**Table 4.1: Sample Respondents by Gender**

Gender	No. of voters	Percent
Males	3992	55
Females	3332	45
<b>Total</b>	<b>7324</b>	<b>100</b>

**Graph 4.2: Sample Respondents by Gender**



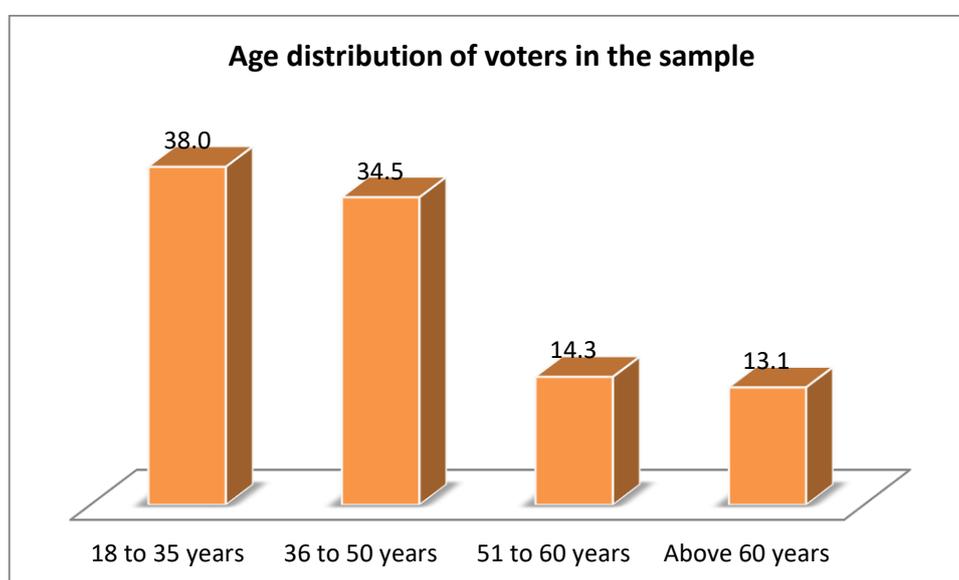
## 4.3 Sample Distribution by Age Group

38 per cent of the voters in the sample are in the young age group of 18-35, 34.5 per cent of the voters in the sample are in the middle aged group 36 – 50 years of age whereas 27 per cent of the sample covered consists of voters higher than 51 years of age.

Table 4.2: Sample Respondents by Age

Age	Number of voters	Percent
18 to 35 years	2781	38.0
36 to 50 years	2530	34.5
51 to 60 years	1050	14.3
Above 60 years	963	13.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>7324</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Graph 4.3: Sample Respondents by Age

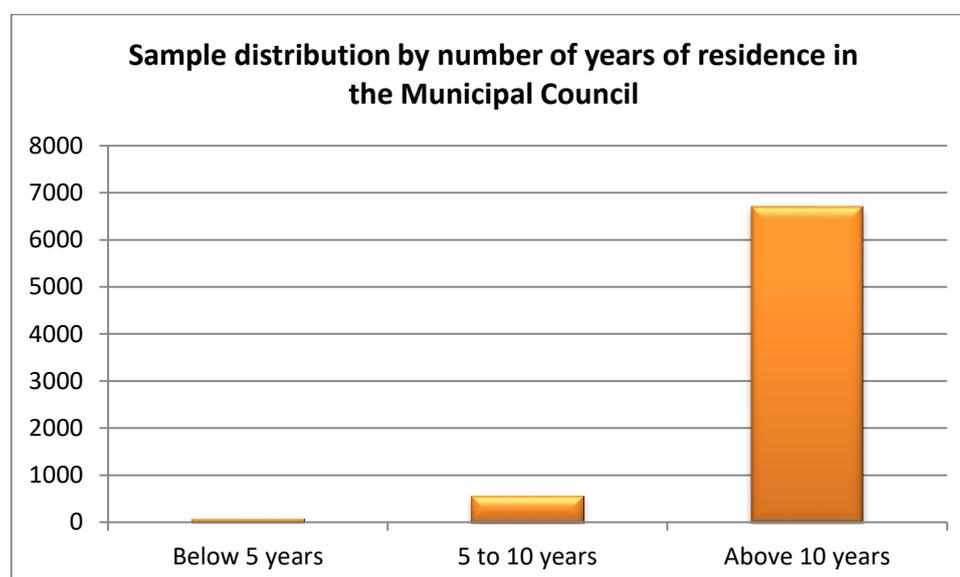


### Sample distribution by number of years of residence in the Municipal Council

Observations of events such as bribery, personal attacks during speeches etc. could be dependent on the number of years that the voter has resided in the area. Hence, it is important to understand sample demographics in terms of number of years of residence within the Council. Within the sample, a majority of voters (91.5 per cent) seem to have resided in the Municipal Council for more than 10 years.

**Table 4.3: Sample distribution by number of years of residence**

No. of years of stay in the Council	No. of voters	Percent
Below 5 years	70	1.0
5 to 10 years	554	7.6
Above 10 years	6700	91.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>7324</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Graph 4.4: Sample distribution by number of years of residence in the Municipal Council**

### 1.2 Sample distribution by Socio-Economic Classification (SEC)

Finally, it is also important to understand the socio-economic classification of the voters covered in the sample. Reading habits, political awareness, observation of MCC violations could be directly influenced by the socio-economic class to which the voter belongs.

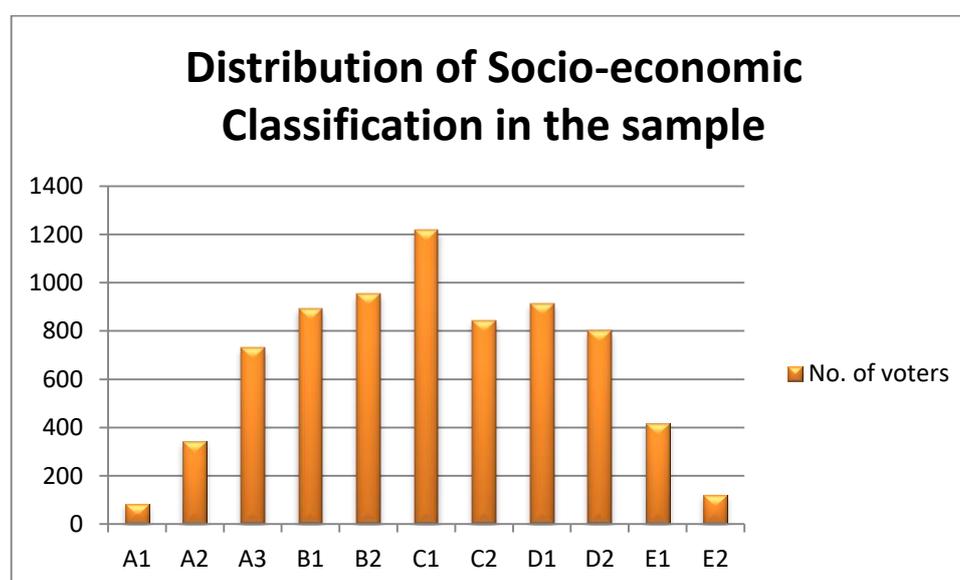
This study uses the “New Socio-Economic Classification (SEC) System” by the Media Research User’s Council (MRUC) to classify Indian households into different socio-economic groups<sup>9</sup>. The new SEC model is heavily based on the Indian Readership Survey (IRS)’s model of using the education level of the main earner of the family together with the number of assets owned by the family to arrive at the socio-economic classification (SEC) of the respondent. The questionnaire contained questions to ascertain the number of assets held by the family of the respondent as well as to understand the education of the main earner of the family. Based on this information, the SEC system developed by MRUC was applied to create an understanding of the socio-economic classification of the voter.

The following table and graph show the distribution of socio-economic classes within the sample. Category A voters are those which belong to families in which the main earner is highly educated and a high number of (the standard 11) assets are held by the family. Category D voters are those which belong to families in which the main earner is not well-educated and a low number of (the standard 11) assets are held by the family.

**Table 4.4: Sample Respondents by Socio-Economic Classification**

Socio-economic Classification	No. of voters	Percent
A1	84	1.1
A2	342	4.7
A3	732	10.0
B1	894	12.2
B2	954	13.0
C1	1219	16.6
C2	845	11.5
D1	915	12.5
D2	800	10.9
E1	418	5.7
E2	121	1.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>7324</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Graph 4.5: Sample Respondents by Socio-Economic Classification**



This chapter indicated sample demographics. When the sampling plan is robust, sample data tends to be unbiased and hence, predictions about the population can be made with good level of confidence. Since the data for this study was collected using a systematic sampling plan, no major bias seems to be influencing the data. The next chapter discusses the main findings of the study.

## CHAPTER 5

### MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY

This chapter outlines the major findings of the voter perception survey conducted in 20 Municipal Councils in the week prior to elections in November and December 2016. As mentioned earlier, the objectives of the survey can be divided into three major components.

- I. Voter perceptions regarding the importance of MCC guidelines
- II. Voter perceptions regarding violations of the MCC guidelines
- III. Voter perceptions regarding MCC implementation machinery

The first objective is to understand whether the urban voters feel that MCC guidelines play a useful role in conduct of elections. The second is to assess voter reaction to violations of MCC by political parties and candidates. The third objective is to document what voters feel about the existing implementation machinery.

The results of the survey are shown below.

#### 5.1 VOTER PERCEPTION REGARDING IMPORTANCE OF MCC GUIDELINES

The first objective of the study was to document and analyze whether voters are aware about MCC guidelines and how important they perceive the guidelines to be.

Some MCC guidelines are well-known because they often get discussed in the local or even national media. For example, that candidates should not bribe voters is a well-known guideline. Similarly, candidates are not supposed to announce new developmental projects once elections are declared, because this could be used by .to create undue advantage in their favour. In consultation with the SECM, we chose the 4 most discussed/ reported/ observed MCC guidelines (given below) and asked voters whether they were aware of any of the given guidelines.

Which of the following guidelines of the Model Code of Conduct did you know about?

- a. Political parties should not bribe voters.
- b. Political parties should not use caste or religion in the election propaganda.
- c. Candidates should not disturb meetings held by their opponents.
- d. Political party in power should not announce any new developmental project in the area.
- e. All of the above
- f. None of the above

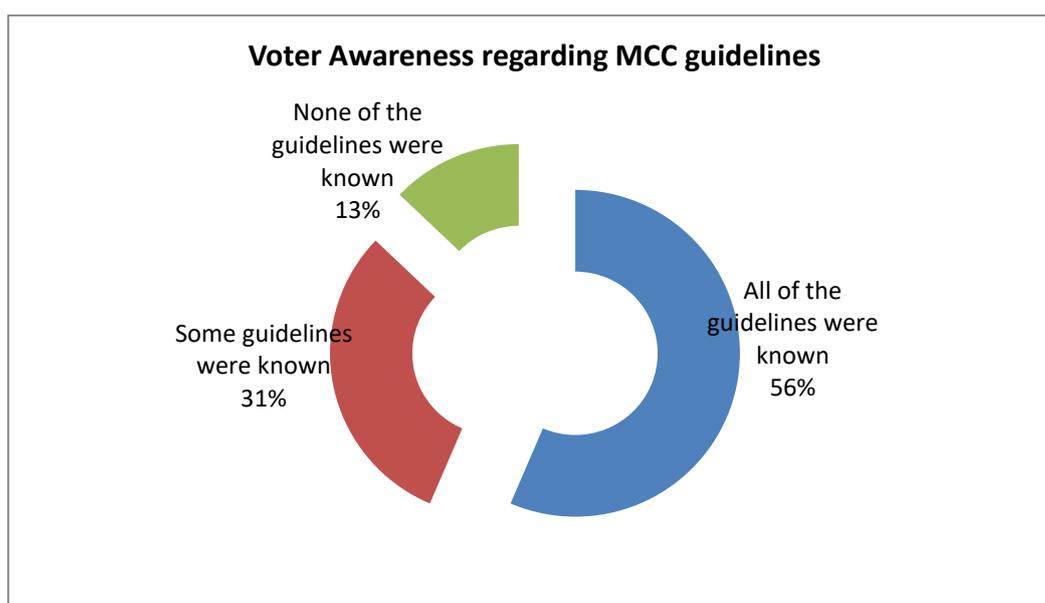
Voters were free to choose one or multiple options from a tod. It is interesting to note that 56.3 per cent of the voters replied that they were aware of all of the guidelines written in the questionnaire, whereas 13 per cent did not know about even a single guideline.31 per cent were in the know about at least a few of the guidelines mentioned in the questionnaire. Thus,

around 87 per cent of the voters in the Municipal Councils seem to be aware about at least some of the MCC guidelines.

**Table 5.1: Voter Awareness about MCC Guidelines**

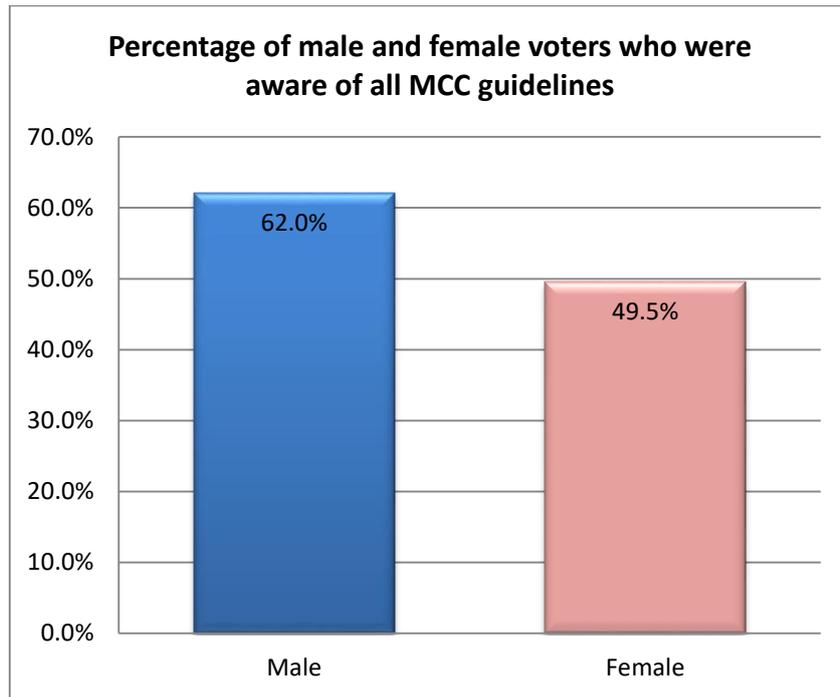
Awareness about MCC	Number of voters	Percent of total voters
All of the guidelines were known	4127	57
Some guidelines were known	2273	31
None of the guidelines were known	924	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>7324</b>	

**Graph 5.1: Voter Awareness about MCC Guidelines**

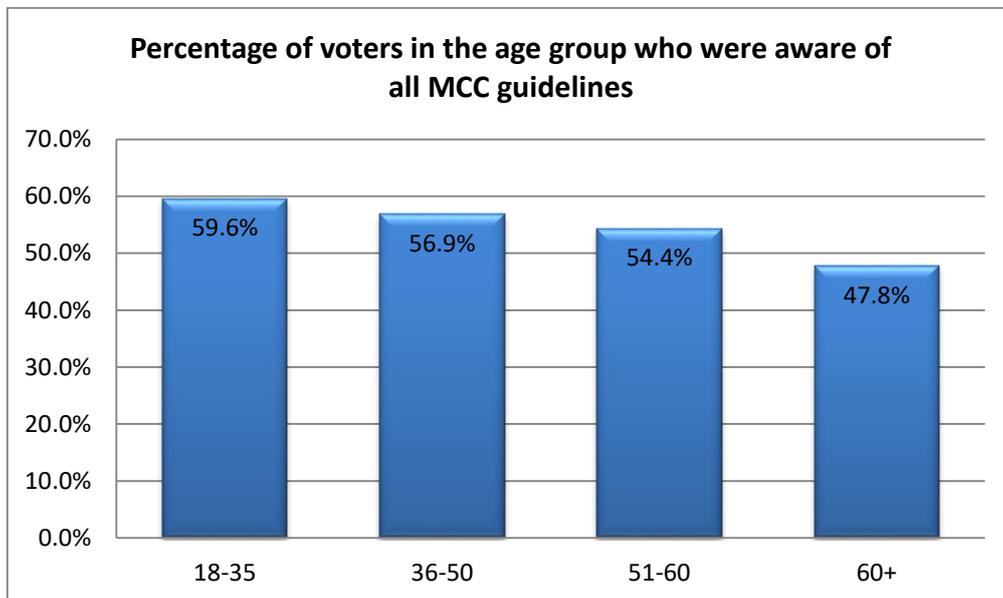


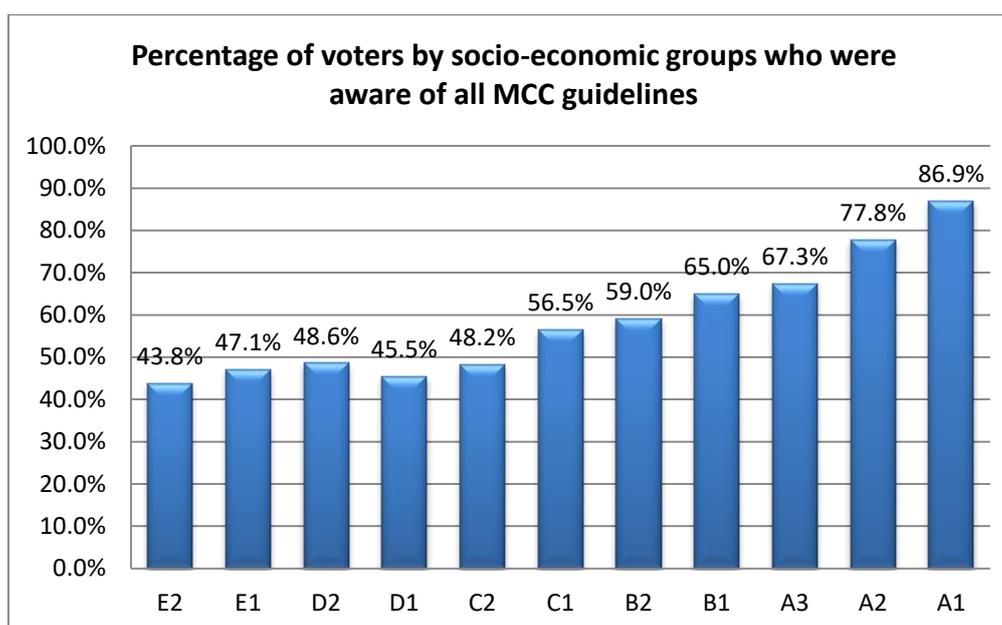
Further, it is interesting to note that awareness about MCC guidelines significantly depends upon gender, age and socio-economic classification of the voter. A higher percentage of male voters were aware of all the guidelines in the questionnaire as compared to female voters. Similarly, a higher percentage of younger voters knew about all guidelines in the questionnaire as compared to older voters. Finally, a higher percentage of voters classified under socio-economic classification “A” were aware about all guidelines in the questionnaire as compared to older voters. Following graphs are self-explanatory.

**Graph 5.2: Gender and Awareness about MCC guidelines**



**Graph 5.3: Age and Awareness about MCC guidelines**

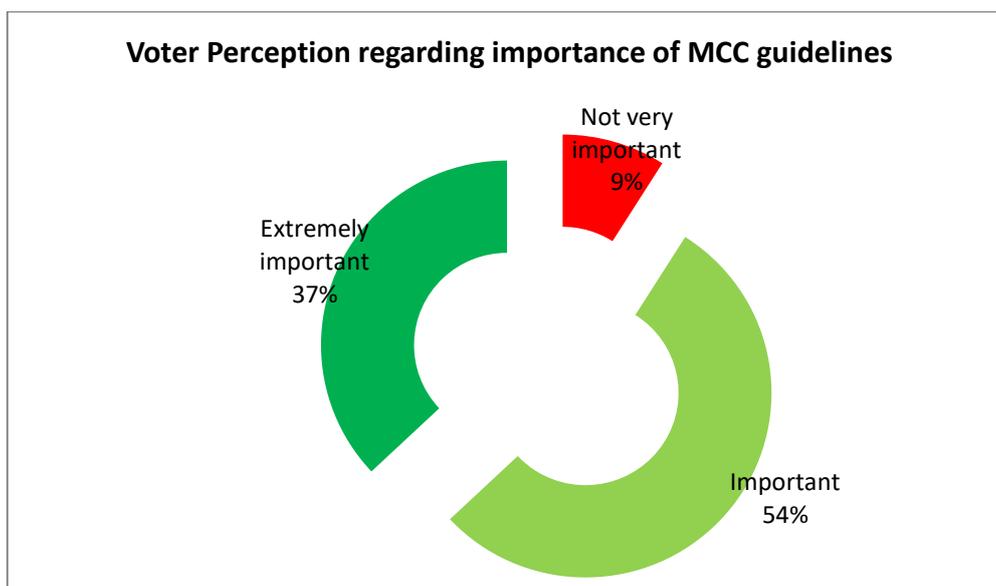


**Graph 5.4: Socio-Economic Classification and Awareness about MCC guidelines**

Given that 88 per cent of all voters were aware about at least a few MCC guidelines, did they perceive it to be important for smooth conduct of the elections? We asked voters to rank the importance of MCC guidelines on a scale of 1 to 10. We re-grouped the responses of the voters into 3 categories. A score of less than 4 was re-grouped as “Not very important”, score of 4 -7 was re-grouped as “Important” and a score of more than 7 was re-grouped as “Extremely Important”. The following table elucidates.

**Table 5.2: How important are MCC guidelines for conducting elections smoothly?**

How important are MCC guidelines for carrying out elections smoothly?	Number of voters	Percent of total
Not very important	643	9.00
Important	3986	54.00
Extremely important	2676	37.00
Can't Say	19	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>7324</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Graph 5.5: How important are MCC guidelines for conducting elections smoothly?**

Thus, we find that 87 per cent of the voters are aware about at least some of the guidelines under MCC and 91 per cent of the voters perceive the guidelines to be important or extremely important in the conduct of elections.

## 5.2 VOTER PERCEPTIONS REGARDING VIOLATIONS OF THE MCC GUIDELINES

The main objective of the survey was to analyze voter perceptions regarding MCC violations. Despite continuous efforts by the SEC, reports of violation of MCC run rife in the media in the run-up to the elections. The immediate, and mostly mute, spectator to these violations is the voter. This voter attends meetings in which there might be personal attacks on opponents, is visited by party workers who might invoke religion or caste to influence the voter, experiences traffic jams in the locality before meetings, realizes that new roads are being laid just before the elections, and sometimes even experiences first-hand an attempt by the candidates to bribe him/ her to garner votes. The study aimed to document which MCC violations had been observed most by voters. In consultation with the SECM, a list of the most reported MCC violations was created (See list a- k given below). Voters were asked to react to the following statements by saying “Agree”, “Disagree” or “Cannot Say”.

- a. There is an appeal to castes and communities in speeches for securing votes.
- b. Criticism of other political parties and candidates during speeches is not restricted to their policies and programmes, but gets personal.
- c. Banners, notices, slogans are written on buildings and compounds of individuals unconnected to the parties.
- d. Posters issued by one party are removed by another.

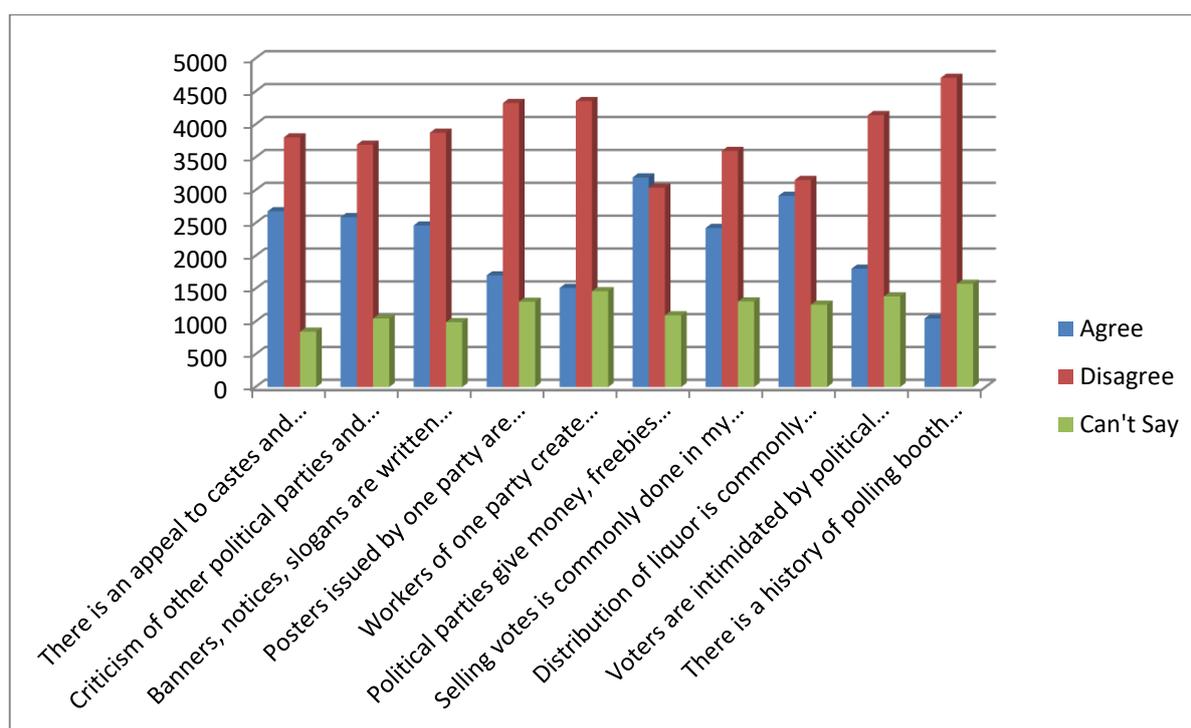
- e. Workers of one party create disturbances at meetings organized by other parties.
- f. Political parties give money, freebies and gifts to lure the voters.
- g. Selling votes is a common practice in my constituency.
- h. Distribution of liquor is a common practice in my constituency.
- i. Voters are intimidated by political parties.
- j. There is a history of polling booth violence in my constituency.

The answers to the above questions are given below in tabular format.

**Table 5.3: Voter Perceptions regarding MCC violations**

<b>Statement about Violation of MCC</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Can't Say</b>
<b>There is an appeal to castes and communities in speeches for securing votes</b>	2679	3801	844
<b>Criticism of other political parties and candidates during speeches is not restricted to their policies and programmes, but gets personal</b>	2590	3690	1044
<b>Banners, notices, slogans are written on buildings and compounds of individuals unconnected to the parties</b>	2463	3872	989
<b>Posters issued by one party are removed by another.</b>	1701	4323	1300
<b>Workers of one party create disturbances at meetings organized by other parties.</b>	1510	4353	1460
<b>Political parties give money, freebies and gifts to lure the voters.</b>	3193	3038	1093
<b>Selling votes is a common practice in my constituency.</b>	2425	3595	1304
<b>Distribution of liquor is a common practice in my constituency</b>	2914	3155	1255
<b>Voters are intimidated by political parties.</b>	1804	4139	1381
<b>There is a history of polling booth violence in my constituency</b>	1044	4706	1574

Graph 5.6: Voter Perceptions regarding MCC violations



From the above graph, it can be seen that except for one statement, the “Disagree” response to all violations is higher as compared to the “Agree” response. Thus, the number of voters who disagree with the fact that liquor is distributed prior to elections is higher than the number of voters who agree with this fact; similarly the number of voters who disagree with castes and communities being appealed to is higher than those who agree with it.

One naive way of interpreting this is that the MCC violation of liquor distribution may not be as blatant as one perceives it to be through reports in local media. This is a good conclusion from an SECM perspective, one that implies that MCC violations are not really very high in Maharashtra at the local body level. However, whilst it is a convenient conclusion from a policy perspective, it need not be correct, especially considering the inherent negation bias in voter responses.

It would be fair to presume that voter responses with reference to violation of MCC have an inherent negation bias. When quizzed about distribution of cash or liquor by candidates in the area, several voters tend to answer in the negative, either because they perceive affirmation of the same to be an implicit acknowledgement of being beneficiaries of such violation, or because they perceive the enumerator to be part of the MCC implementation machinery and do not want to risk getting reported as a witness to violation of the code of conduct. In either case, there is a possibility that many voters may tend to respond in the negative to queries regarding violation of MCC by the party candidates, thereby strengthening the negation bias in the survey.

This could be the reason why the response “Disagree” is seen to be higher than “Agree” for most cases. Two immediate conclusions follow.

- a. Even with the negation bias, more voters agree than disagree with the statement that political parties distribute cash and freebies. This implies that this must be one of the most blatantly observed amongst all violations, one which is so blatant that the overall response is “Agree” despite the negation bias.
- b. Importantly, this also implies that whilst analyzing which violations are the most observed or blatant violations of the MCC, it is necessary to account for the inherent negation bias.

Precisely in view of the inherent negation bias in responses to surveys on sensitive matters such as violation of code of conduct prior to and during elections, GIPE had undertaken another parallel fact-finding exercise wherein it had deployed observers to keenly “observe” incidences that could be termed as violation of the MCC<sup>10</sup>. The study only reinforces our view that while the outcome of the present survey indicates that MCC violations are not really very high in Maharashtra at elections to the local bodies, the truth lies obfuscated on account of the negation bias.

How do we identify the most “blatant” and the most “weak” MCC violations? In order to identify blatant violations, we take the percentage of the response “Agree” to the total number of responses for every statement). The mean level and variance level of the Agree/ Total Responses percentage for all statements is then worked out. If the percentage of voters who agree with a particular statement exceeds mean plus one standard deviation of all percentages considered together, then there is a case for identifying “blatant” violations. If the variance is too high, we could consider a mean plus 0.5 standard deviation rule for identification.

Similarly, the data can be used to identify “weak” violations. In order to understand weak violations, we take the percentage of the response “Disagree” to the total number of responses for every statement. The above analysis suggests that the proportion of “Disagree” is likely to be very high with the current data. This is likely to lead to a wrong conclusion that almost all MCC violations mentioned above are soft or weak violations. Hence, we use the mean and standard deviation rule. If the percentage of voters who disagree with a particular statement exceeds mean plus one standard deviation of all percentages considered together, only then there is a case for identifying “weak” violations. If the variance is too high, we could consider a mean plus 0.5 standard deviation rule for identification of weak violations.

The following table elucidates.

Table 5.4: Identifying the Blatant, the Sporadic and the Weak MCC Violations

Statement about Violation of MCC	Agree	Disagree	Can't Say	Agree/ Total	Disagree/ Total
There is an appeal to castes and communities in speeches for securing votes	2679	3801	844	0.37	0.52
Criticism of other political parties and candidates during speeches is not restricted to their policies and programmes, but gets personal	2590	3690	1044	0.35	0.5
Banners, notices, slogans are written on buildings and compounds of individuals unconnected to the parties	2463	3872	989	0.34	0.53
Posters issued by one party are removed by another.	1701	4323	1300	0.23	0.59
Workers of one party create disturbances at meetings organized by other parties.	1510	4353	1460	0.21	0.59
Political parties give money, freebies and gifts to lure the voters.	3193	3038	1093	0.44	0.41
Selling votes is commonly done in my constituency.	2425	3595	1304	0.33	0.49
Distribution of liquor is commonly done in my constituency	2914	3155	1255	0.4	0.43
Voters are intimidated by political parties.	1804	4139	1381	0.25	0.57
There is a history of polling booth violence in my constituency	1044	4706	1574	0.14	0.64
Mean				0.31	0.53
Std Deviation				0.09	0.07
Mean + 0.5 s.d.				0.35	0.56

Following are the “blatant” MCC violations witnessed by urban voters in Municipal Councils of Maharashtra.

- a. Distribution of money, freebies and gifts by candidates to lure voters.
- b. Distribution of liquor by candidates to lure voters.
- c. Appeal to castes and communities in speeches for securing votes.

Following are the “weak” MCC violations witnessed by urban voters in Municipal Councils of Maharashtra.

- a. History of polling booth violence.
- b. Removal of posters of one party by another.
- c. Disturbance caused by workers of one party at meetings organized by other parties.
- d. Intimidation of voters by political parties.

The violations which are neither “Blatant” nor “Weak” are classified as Sporadic violations. Voters neither strongly agree to having witnessed these nor do they strongly disagree to have witnessed the same.

Following are the “sporadic” MCC violations witnessed by urban voters in Municipal Councils of Maharashtra.

- a. Personal criticism of candidates rather than criticism of policies and programmes.
- b. Hoisting banners, writing notices/slogans on buildings and compounds of individuals not connected with the parties.
- c. Selling votes a common practice.

The violations included in the “blatant” violations have to do with directly influencing the voters either through distribution of money, gifts or by throwing liquor parties. Another study by Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics on Municipal Councils in the same time period of one week prior to elections concludes that the actual spending by candidates and parties is at least 4 times higher than the allowed expenditure limits in the Councils<sup>11</sup>. Astoundingly, it looks like at least Rs.9 crores are spent in every Municipal Council in just the one week prior to elections; of this amount, 60 per cent is spent on cash distribution and liquor parties. The findings of the present study corroborate the findings of the other study.

Blatant violations of the MCC call for immediate action by the local administration and SECM machinery. Is the nature of blatant violations of MCC as observed by voters similar everywhere? Councils in the same division were clubbed together to see if there are different violations that are more blatantly observed in the different divisions of Maharashtra.

Table 5.5: Blatant Violations by Divisions in Maharashtra

Blatant Violations in different divisions	I	II	III
Pune			
Nashik			
Aurangabad			
Konkan			
Nagpur			
Amravati			

\*Refer to the colour codes given below

Colour Codes	Political parties give money, freebies and gifts to lure the voters.
	There is traffic chaos whenever meetings or rallies are organized.
	Distribution of liquor is commonly done in my constituency
	Selling votes is commonly done in my constituency.
	Criticism of other political parties and candidates during speeches is not restricted to their policies and programmes, but gets personal
	Banners, notices, slogans are written on buildings and compounds of individuals unconnected to the parties
	There is an appeal to castes and communities in speeches for securing votes

One of the research questions in the study was to understand whether MCC implementation has any kind of correlation with the voter turnout (VT) of the Municipal Councils and with the level of competition amongst political parties. To do this, data on the voter turnout percentage in the 2012 Municipal Council elections was considered.

The following table shows the values of VT and the score given to MCC implementation by the voters in the individual Councils.

**Table 5.6: VT and Score given to MCC implementation by Voters for the Municipal Councils within the Sample**

Name of Municipal Council	District	Division	VT	MCC implementation score
<b>Beed</b>	Beed	Aurangabad	49.59	8.1
<b>Dharmabad</b>	Nanded	Aurangabad	61.44	6.59
<b>Hingoli</b>	Hingoli	Aurangabad	57.18	6.85
<b>PethUmri</b>	Nanded	Aurangabad	74.76	7.72
<b>Tuljapur</b>	Osmanabad	Aurangabad	73.56	6.13
<b>Talegaon-Dabhade</b>	Pune	Pune	66.85	6.83
<b>Murgud</b>	Kolhapur	Pune	86.65	6.33
<b>Jaisingpur</b>	Kolhapur	Pune	73.72	7.19
<b>Maindargi</b>	Solapur	Pune	74.46	4.44
<b>Shirdi</b>	Ahmednagar	Nashik	80.92	6.36
<b>Chopda</b>	Jalgaon	Nashik	70.98	6.66
<b>Faizpur</b>	Jalgaon	Nashik	74.28	7.5
<b>Buldhana</b>	Buldhana	Amravati	54.17	8.65
<b>Murtijapur</b>	Akola	Amravati	62.51	7.4
<b>Roha</b>	Raigad	Konkan	69.05	6.67
<b>Vengurle</b>	Sindhudurg	Konkan	59.78	7.83
<b>Pauni</b>	Bhandara	Nagpur	74.96	6.44
<b>Pulgaon</b>	Wardha	Nagpur	75.11	5.45

We next compute the correlations between VT and MCC implementation score.

**Table 5.7: Correlation Matrix between VT AND MCC (implementation) SCORE**

Correlation Matrix		VT	MCC SCORE
VT	<b>Pearson Correlation</b>	1	-.583*
	<b>p value</b>		.011
	<b>N</b>	18	18
MCC RANK	<b>Pearson Correlation</b>	-.583*	1
	<b>p value</b>	.011	
	<b>N</b>	18	18

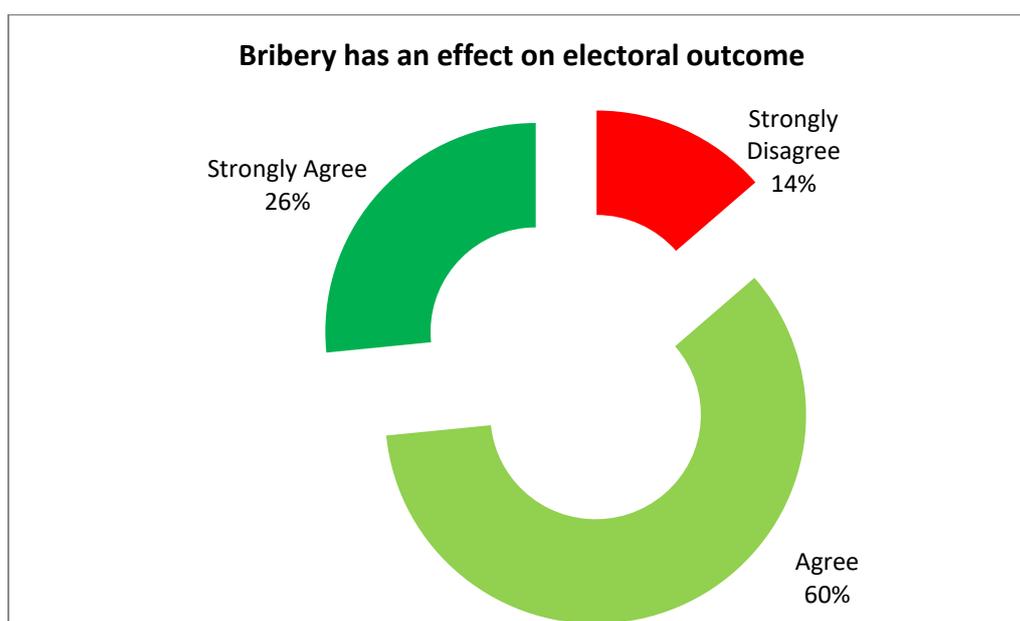
\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The correlation between Voter Turnout and MCC implementation, interestingly, is significant and negative. This implies that MCC implementation is poorer in Councils where the Voter Turnout percentage is high. Why could this be the case?

In an earlier study by Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics on Municipal Council elections, it has been shown that those Councils wherein the VT is very high are those where political parties try to have a bigger presence<sup>12</sup>. Thus, a high voter turnout also implies that the level of competition between political parties in the elections would be very high. This automatically creates the logical backdrop for MCC violations; higher the competition, higher the instances of flouting MCC guidelines would be, as parties try to win voters over through bribery, liquor parties, personal attacks on other candidates etc.

There is a worrisome reality which comes to the fore together with the above observation of distribution of cash and liquor by political parties. Apart from seeking voter perceptions on distribution of cash and freebies by parties, the questionnaire also asked voters if they thought that bribery had an impact on electoral outcomes. Do voters observe those parties which are most active in terms of bribing the voters as winning the elections? We asked voters to give a score of 1 to 10 for this question, with 1 indicating “Strongly Disagree” and 10 indicating “Strongly Agree” on a scale of 1 to 10. We re-grouped the responses of the voters into 3 categories. A score of less than 4 was re-grouped as “Strongly disagree”, score of 4 -7 was re-grouped as “Agree” and a score of more than 7 was re-grouped as “Strongly Agree”.

Very worryingly, 26 per cent of the voters strongly agree with the fact that bribery has an impact on electoral outcomes, whereas another 60 per cent too agree with this statement. The following graph elucidates.

**Graph 5.7: Bribery has an effect on electoral outcome**

This observation is one of great concern from a policy perspective. It implies that money power not only distorts the level-playing field between candidates, but it also brings into power undeserving and corrupt candidates. This, by itself, defeats the very spirit of having free, fair and transparent elections.

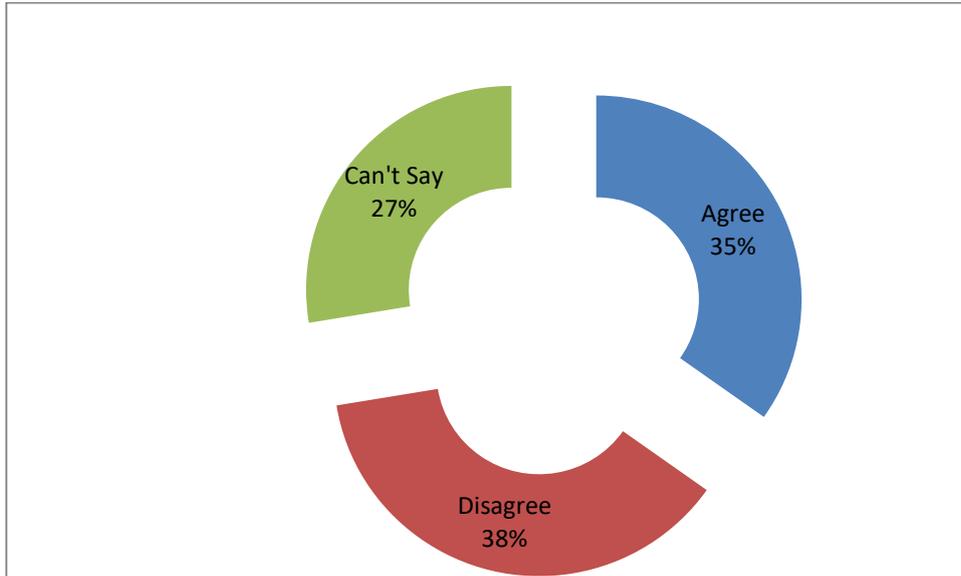
One of the “happy” finding of the present study is that the theme of violence and intimidation in elections is systematically rejected across Municipal Councils in Maharashtra. Violations such as violence at polls, voter intimidation, scuffles between party workers etc. have not really been observed significantly by voters; hence, these violations are the “weak” violations in Maharashtra.

### 5.3 VOTER PERCEPTIONS REGARDING MCC IMPLEMENTATION MACHINERY

The last set of objectives of the study dealt with documenting and analyzing voter perceptions regarding MCC implementation. Implementation of the Model Code of Conduct is tricky, given that the MCC is just a set of guidelines, those too created by political parties themselves, and not a law. Hence, making sure that the guidelines are not flouted is in a way, the responsibility of all stake-holders. Political parties, voters, NGOs, local administration and administrators appointed by the SECM all have to keep a close watch on violations of the MCC guidelines.

Voters were asked what they had observed regarding vigilance of voters as a stakeholder group. They were asked to react to the statement “Voters rarely complain to the authorities if they observe violation of MCC guidelines” with an “Agree”, “Disagree” or “Can’t Say” response. The results are interesting.

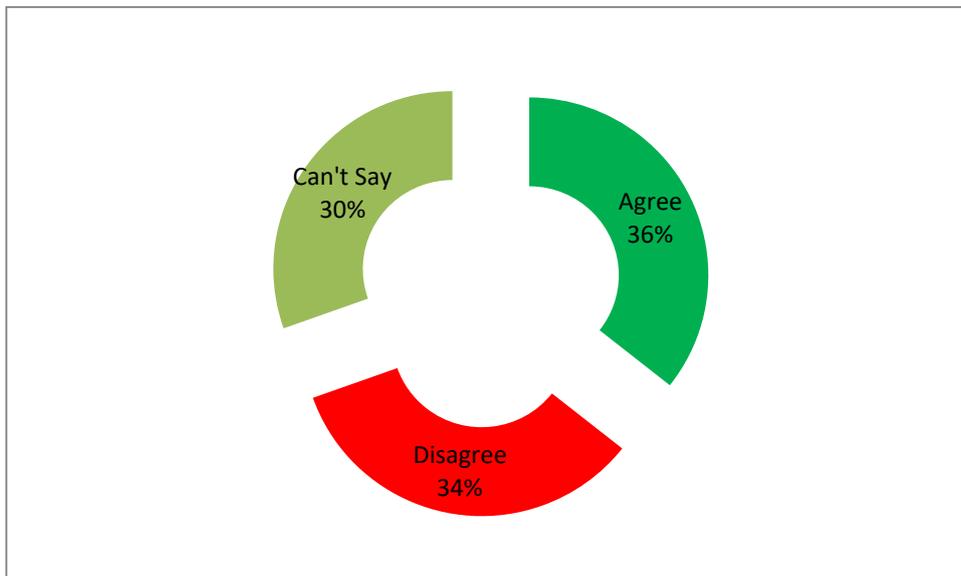
**Graph 5.8: Voters rarely complain to the authorities if they observe violation of MCC guidelines**



34.8 per cent of the voters agree that complaints are rare; however, 37.6 per cent of the voters claim that this statement is not true i.e. 37.6 per cent of the voters feel that there is a fair amount of voter activism when MCC violations are observed.

The other vigilante community involved in MCC implementation is the SECM itself, which has to take action against violators of the MCC. Voters were asked to react to the statement “No political party or candidate in my area has ever been penalized for violation of MCC guidelines” with an “Agree”, “Disagree” or “Can’t Say” response.

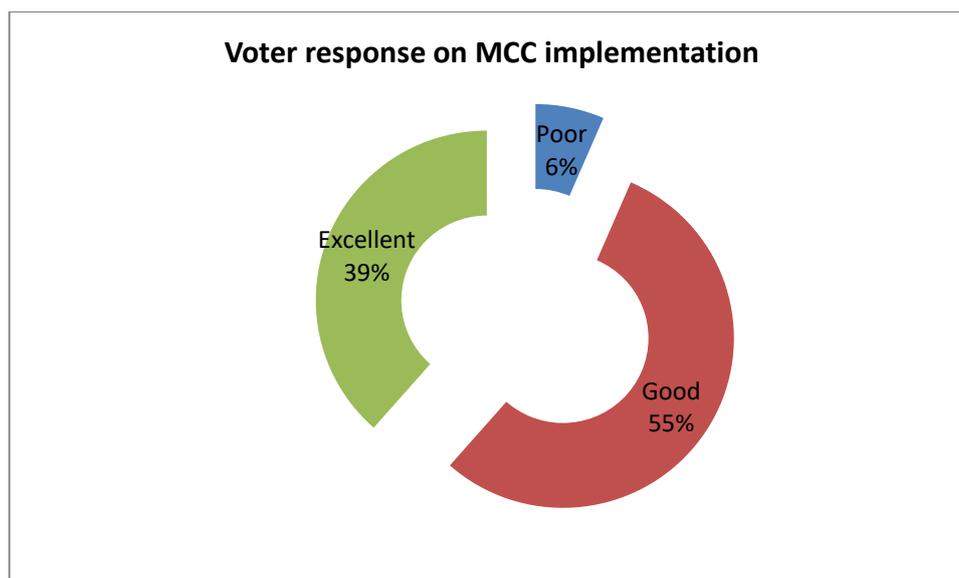
**Graph 5.9: No political party or candidate in my area has ever been penalized for violation of MCC guidelines**



Majority of voters agree with the statement that no penalty has really been meted out to MCC offenders.

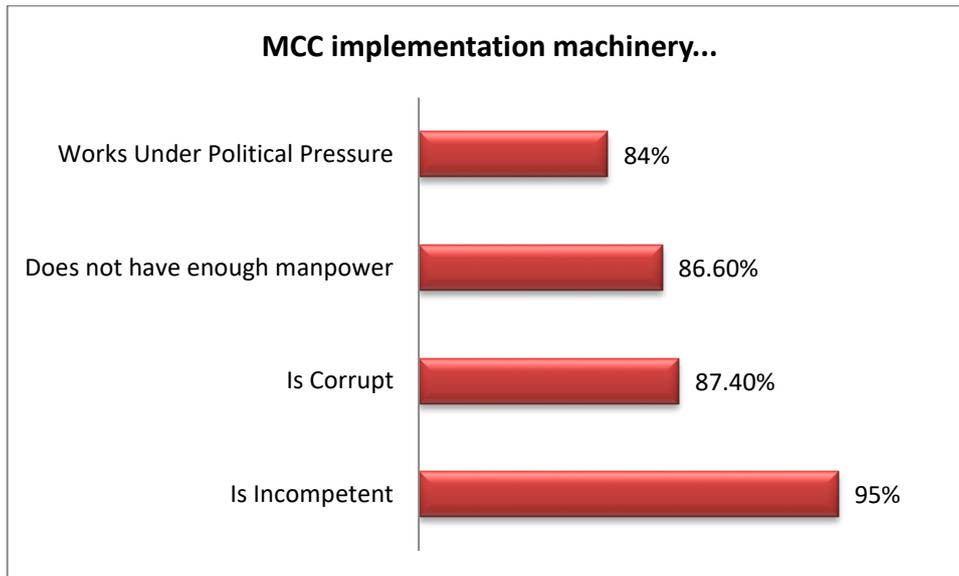
We next asked voters to rank the implementation of MCC guidelines in their Council on a scale of 1 to 10. We re-grouped the responses of the voters into 3 categories. A score of less than 4 on implementation was re-grouped as “Poor”, score of 4 -7 was re-grouped as “Good” and a score of more than 7 was re-grouped as “Excellent”. The following graph elucidates.

**Graph 5.10: Voter Response on MCC Implementation**



Only 39 per cent of voters are very happy with the MCC implementation in their Council. 55 per cent give it a score of 4 to 7 out of 10, whereas 6 per cent of the voters rank the MCC implementation to be “poor”.

Why is the implementation poor? Why is it that the machinery deployed by the SECM does not work to curb violations of the MCC? Is the machinery inefficient, or is it itself corrupt? Do they work under political pressure due to which they are unable to do their job properly? Or is it that the number of observers, informers, police personnel, local body administrators is too low to stop MCC violations? These questions were asked only of those voters who gave a “poor” rank to MCC implementation. The following graph shows aggressive responses given by the voters on these questions.

**Graph 5.11: Perceptions of Voters about Implementation Machinery**

95% of dissatisfied (with the MCC implementation in their Councils) voters feel that the officials are inefficient, whereas 87.4 per cent opine that the machinery in charge of curbing corruption is itself corrupt, raising the issue of who monitors the monitor. 86.6 per cent of the voters would like more manpower to enhance the existing number of officials, whereas 84 per cent claim that the existing machinery shows inefficiency due to political pressure. This again has major implications from a policy perspective; the SECM will have to deploy more manpower and create more efficiency with the help of technology and devise methods to reduce the level of corruption within the observers and action-groups.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

164 Municipal Councils in Maharashtra went into election mode in 2016, beginning 27<sup>th</sup> November 2016. The Model Code of Conduct (MCC) was declared applicable for all the Councils on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2016.

Even though the MCC guidelines are clearly known to all political parties and their candidates, violation of the guidelines is a known and observed phenomenon throughout Maharashtra. The temptation to flout the guidelines for personal advantage gets stronger as the election date approaches. Bribing voters through distribution of money, freebies and liquor, intimidation of voters, hate speeches, disruption of meetings and processions of opponents, etc. are known violations of the MCC. Such violations are routinely observed by the voters, but rarely recorded formally.

Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics undertook a survey in 20 Municipal Councils in Maharashtra in the week prior to elections in November and December 2016 with a view to document and analyze voter perceptions regarding MCC violations. The main objectives of the survey were to study:

- I. Voter perceptions regarding the importance of MCC guidelines
- II. Voter perceptions regarding violations of the MCC guidelines
- III. Voter perceptions regarding MCC implementation machinery

The study comes out with some interesting findings.

- a. Urban voters within Municipal Councils of Maharashtra are well aware of provisions of the MCC; 56 per cent of the voters were aware about the prominent MCC guidelines.
- b. 91 per cent of the voters feel that adherence to MCC guidelines is important for smooth conduct of local body elections in Maharashtra.
- c. Thus, the voter base of Maharashtra is aware about the MCC and understands its importance.
- d. Awareness regarding the MCC is higher among male voters, young voters and voters belonging to a higher socio-economic group.
- e. Voters have systematically rejected the themes of violence, fracas and intimidation in local body elections in Maharashtra.
- f. The worrisome finding of the study is that around 86 per cent of the voters agree to the fact that bribery can affect electoral outcome; thus, they observe that candidates with money power are better placed to win elections.

- g. Only 37 per cent of the voters in Maharashtra feel that voter activism works and that voters lodge a complaint if they observe instances of MCC violations; 34 per cent of the voters agree that voters rarely complain to authorities.
- h. 36 per cent of voters have rarely seen penalty being meted out to political parties or candidates for violations of the MCC
- i. 39 per cent of the voters give an “Excellent” rating to MCC implementation, 55 per cent give it a “Good” rating, whereas 6 per cent of the voters opine that MCC implementation is “Poor”
- j. Reasons for poor implementation are inefficiency, corrupt practices, insufficient manpower and political pressure, necessarily in that order.

The study has major implications from a policy perspective for the SECM. The SECM could include a component of MCC guidelines in its voter awareness programs which are run all over Maharashtra. It could also request NGOs active in governance issues to form pressure groups to actively report any MCC violations observed in the Councils. Any reports of MCC violations have to be followed up with penalizing actions; in the absence of penalty, MCC guidelines remain largely toothless.

More will have to be done to curb the menace of money power, which results in distorting campaigning as well as electoral outcomes.

The SECM will have to deploy more manpower for observation and implementation of MCC guidelines. Technology could be used more efficiently on field to detect violations as well as to initiate prompt action against the violators. Finally, corruption is a menace that is associated with not only political parties and candidates, but unfortunately also with the administrative machinery in Maharashtra. Unless strict actions are taken to weed out corrupt elements from administration, MCC implementation cannot really become forceful.

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**APPENDIX A****QUESTIONNAIRE****PRE POLL VOTERS' SURVEY ON MCC GUIDELINES AND IMPLEMENTATION IN  
MUNICIPAL COUNCILS OF MAHARASHTRA****Module A – Basic Information**

City Code :-

1. Name :
2. Age :  
Code :-
  1. 18 – 35
  2. 36 – 50
  3. 51 – 60
  4. 60 +
3. Gender :  
Codes :
  1. Male
  2. Female
4. Address :
5. Mobile no. / LandLine no. :
6. Caste Category:  
Codes : -
  1. Open
  2. SC
  3. ST
  4. BCC
7. Identification Number:  
Codes :-
  1. Aadhar Card
  2. Pan Card
  3. Driving License
  4. Any other
8. No. of years of stay in the survey area :  
Codes :-

1. Less than 5 years
  2. 5 -10 years /
  3. More than 10 years
9. Education of Respondent
1. Illiterate
  2. Schooling upto Std. IV
  3. Std. V to Std. IX
  4. SSC to HSC
  5. College including diploma, but not graduate
  6. Graduate/ Post Graduate
10. Education of Main Earner in the Family
1. Illiterate
  2. Schooling upto Std. IV
  3. Std. V to Std. IX
  4. SSC to HSC
  5. College including diploma, but not graduate
  6. Graduate/ Post Graduate

11. Number of Standard 11 Assets owned by family of the respondent

<b>SEC Grid 1</b>		
<b>A.</b>	<b>Items owned/ have access to at home</b>	<b>Yes/ No</b>
1	Electricity connection	
2	Ceiling fan	
3	LPG stove	
4	Two wheeler	
5	Colour TV	
6	Refrigerator	
7	Washing Machine	
8	Personal Computer/ Laptop	
9	Car/ Jeep/ Van	
10	Air Conditioner	
<b>B.</b>	<b>Agricultural land owned</b>	
	<b>Total no. of Standard 11 owned (Max 12)</b>	

12. GPS Coordinates

## Module 2: Questions pertaining to MCC

1. Which of the following guidelines of the Model Code of Conduct did you know about?
  - a. Political parties should not bribe voters.
  - b. Political parties should not use caste or religion in the election propaganda.
  - c. Candidates should not disturb meetings held by their opponents.
  - d. Political party in power should not announce any new developmental project in the area.
  - e. All of the above
  - f. None of the above
2. How important are MCC guidelines for carrying out elections smoothly?  
(Scale 1 to 10, where 1 indicates not important and 10 indicates very important)
3. On basis of your observations, state whether you agree/disagree/cannot say
  - a. There is an appeal to castes and communities in speeches for securing votes.
  - b. Criticism of other political parties and candidates during speeches is not restricted to their policies and programmes, but gets personal.
  - c. Banners, notices, slogans are written on buildings and compounds of individuals unconnected to the parties.
  - d. Posters issued by one party are removed by another.
  - e. Workers of one party create disturbances at meetings organized by other parties.
  - f. There is traffic chaos whenever meetings or rallies are organized.
  - g. Political parties give money, freebies and gifts to lure the voters.
  - h. Selling votes is commonly done in my constituency.
  - i. Distribution of liquor is commonly done in my constituency.
  - j. Voters are intimidated by political parties.
  - k. There is a history of polling booth violence in my constituency.
  - l. Voters rarely complain to the authorities if they observe violation of MCC guidelines.

- 
- m. No political party or candidate in my area has ever been penalized for violation of MCC guidelines.
  4. How would you rank implementation of MCC in your area? (Scale 1 to 10, where 1 indicates poor implementation and 10 indicates excellent implementation)
  5. This question is to be posed only if rank in Q4 is less than 4. Do you agree/disagree/cannot say?
    - a. MCC implementation remains poor because the observers appointed by the election authorities are incompetent.
    - b. MCC implementation remains poor because the observers appointed by the election authorities are corrupt.
    - c. MCC implementation remains poor because the manpower deployed for the same is not sufficient.
    - d. MCC implementation remains poor because the administrative machinery is under political pressure.
  6. What improvements would you suggest in the implementation of the MCC?